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ABSTRACT

The most pressing problem in adult education seems to be resource utilization; alternative solutions to problems exist but are not disseminated, and the most urgent requests are for the synthesizing of available knowledge to meet local program needs. A cooperative extension adoption of an innovation model, specifically the dissemination of Adult Basic Education improved practices, is remarkably effective in terms of adoption and good practice. The Appalachian Adult Education Center's model involves four elements: Awareness, Interest, Trial, and Adoption. The generation of knowledge and even training of practitioners are not by themselves sufficient to cause change; the use of findings is crucial. A Center for Resource Utilization in Adult Education (CRU) should be Federally funded, centrally located, and in addition to acquisition and dissemination of printed materials (through combination with existing services) and preparation of audio-visual presentations, the CRU should be responsible for making personal contacts to ensure adoption of improved practices. (AJ)

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# Adoption of ABE Innovation Model

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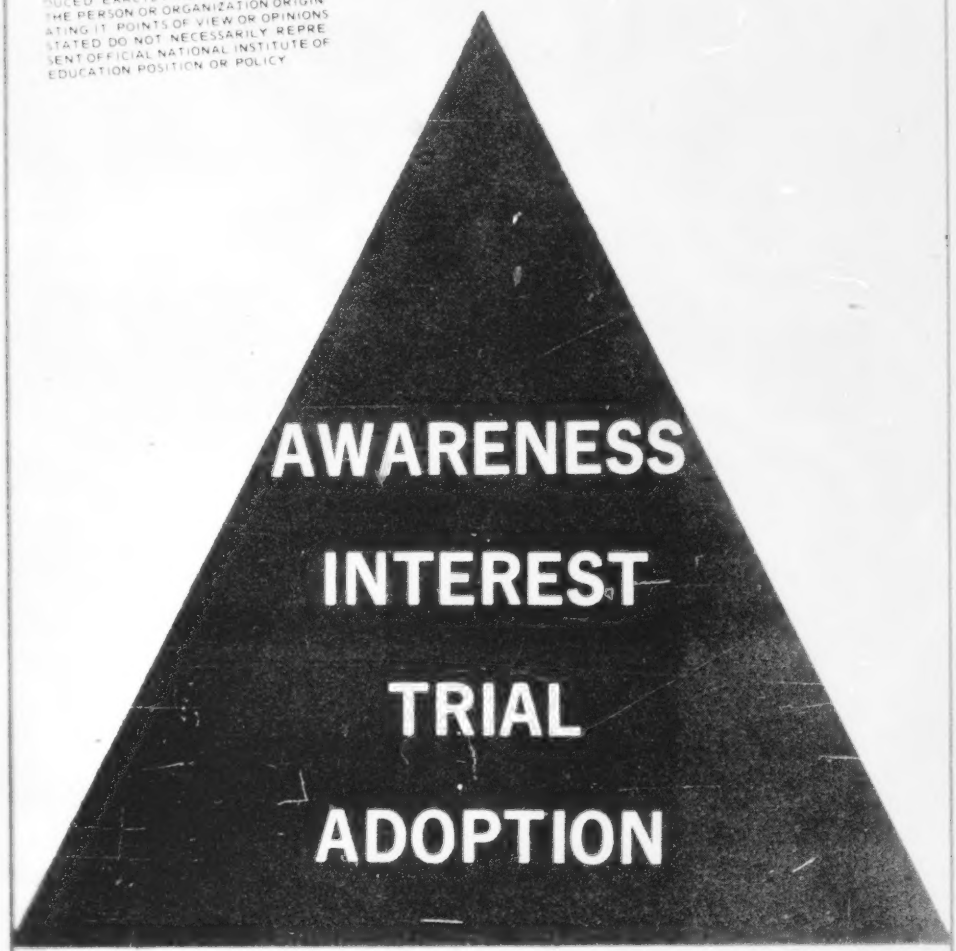


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**Adoption of ABE Innovation Model**

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The Appalachian Adult Education Center (AAEC) is a multi-purpose research and demonstration agency dedicated to the improvement of the quality of adult basic education throughout the thirteen-state Appalachian region.

Toward that end, the Center conducts research on the nature of the adult learner, administers demonstrations of exemplary adult learning programs, trains teachers and administrators in modern methods and techniques of adult instruction, and fosters the development and spread of preferred adult education practices particularly suited to the needs of rural undereducated adults.

## PREFACE

The Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Office of Education, Bureau of Adult, Vocational, and Technical Education, issued (September, 1972) an **OPEN LETTER TO PERSONS INTERESTED IN SUBMITTING PROPOSALS UNDER THE ADULT EDUCATION ACT** (Title III of Public Law 91-320). Proposal Prospectuses, Sections 309(b) and (c), were solicited for Experimental and Demonstration Programs and for Teacher Training Programs for Fiscal Year 1973-74.

The letter identified six priorities for the Division of Adult Education:

- Adult Education Programs for Educationally Disadvantaged Parents
- Adult Career Education Models
- Models for Adult Secondary Education
- Indian Adult Education Programs
- Adoption and Diffusion of Adult Education Information and Materials
- Exemplary Programs for Educationally Disadvantaged Adults

Although the Appalachian Adult Education Center, Morehead State University, has submitted a Prospectus covering several priority areas, it did not identify among them the priority concerned with "Adoption and Diffusion of Adult Education Information and Materials." The "scope of work" and the "nature of the center" as described by the Bureau seemed to prohibit the Center's application.

However, the Appalachian Adult Education Center has for a period of six years served as a change agent for improved adult education practices in the Appalachian region and throughout the nation. Based upon the Center's experiences, findings, and professional dedication, the staff has described its successful model for adoption and diffusion in the following position paper not only in an attempt to influence decision makers but as a demonstration model for local and state change agents.

APPALACHIAN ADULT EDUCATION CENTER

A POSITION PAPER ON

# A CENTER FOR RESOURCE UTILIZATION IN ADULT EDUCATION

The Appalachian Adult Education Center has had considerable success over the years in the diffusion of information on adult education. Although its geographic location and mechanical production limitations tend to prohibit the AAEC submission of a proposal for funding as the Center for Resource Utilization in Adult Education outlined in the BAVTE priorities for 309 (b) FY'73-74, the professional interest concerns and experience dictate an expression of AAEC insights related to a Center for Resource Utilization.

The Center has found that a cooperative extension adoption of innovation model, applied in a systematic fashion, specifically the dissemination of ABE improved practices, is remarkably effective in terms of adoption and good practice.

Both in the present and in the future the most pressing problem in adult education seems to be resource utilization. Alternative answers to many other adult education problems exist but are not disseminated. New knowledge will come, some generated as existing new knowledge is applied, which also will need dissemination. As the AAEC staff moves around the country in their work, the most urgent requests are for the synthesizing of available knowledge to meet local program needs.

## CHANGE AGENTS, MIDDLEMEN, OR BOTH?

From the experience of the AAEC it would seem that the position of the proposed Center staff would be both that (1) of **middlemen** interpreting and disseminating research and demonstration findings to different levels of practitioners and (2) of **change agents** actively encouraging adoption of innovation through personal contact. The whole mass of experimental output of Sections 304, 309 and all other agencies engaged in adult education needs to be fed into these processes.

## DIFFUSION MODEL:

The AAEC has closely examined the role of the change agent. Charged with the responsibility of promoting significant improvement in adult basic education (ABE), that is, of promoting change, the AAEC staff found it needed to know theory and practice in the adoption of innovation. The Center was designed to conduct experimental programs (demonstration), to generate knowledge concerning the Appalachian ABE student (research), and to prepare ABE personnel (training). These three functions of demonstration, research, and training were designed to cause change in ABE. The change desired was the initiation of ABE where none existed and the upgrading of ABE that does exist. However, it became increasingly evident that the generation of knowledge concerning students and programs and even the training of practitioners for local programs were not sufficient tools within themselves to cause the desired change. To have knowledge available is only one step in the use of that knowledge. Since the AAEC does define its job as a change agent, the use of its findings was seen as being as crucial as the production of those findings. The definition of strategies for dissemination and implementation was developed during the 1970-71 year to be carried out in the following years. Thirteen state directors of adult education devoted almost three days to the question of usage of AAEC products and how the Center would more effectively promote the desired changes.

The cooperative extension model for change involves four elements:

Awareness
Interest
Trial
Adoption

The change model above is usually employed in studying the adoption of innovative practitioners. It also can be used, with some modifications, to study intervention in the process of change by a center or diffusion unit. The model would be modified to serve adult education as follows:

AWARENESS – refers to the activities of the center which develop awareness on the part of its audiences. These activities take the form of printed materials or of oral presentations about known findings. The information disseminated is general in nature, but the task is to convince the differentiated audiences that their situations are not so unique as to rule out application of the findings or practices.

The AAEC has found that often awareness of findings should precede those findings, that is, that the decision-makers who might be users of a specific finding are best involved at the onset of considerations or of projects. As they define problems in ABE and possible solutions, they become more aware of and are more open to tested solutions for those problems. This means dissemination and feedback from proposals and putting proposal writers in contact with the state directors of adult education, other practitioners, other agency personnel, state advisory committee members, and local advisory committee members. In addition, involvement of consultants encourages local agencies and institutions of higher education to develop awareness in the ABE enterprise while preventing proposals replicating existing knowledge. While lending their expertise, the consultants learn first hand of the ABE problem under investigation and its proposed solutions.

The Appalachian Adult Education Center staff has become increasingly conscious of the effectiveness of oral presentations for the dissemination of information at the awareness level. Although oral presentation reaches fewer people, those people are exposed to the information while a written presentation may or may not be read. AAEC staff members usually get more feedback from oral presentations at the awareness level than they do from written presentations, perhaps because the audience have made an investment of their time to be there and are in a position to ask questions while the subject is fresh in their minds. Also, oral presentation is more likely to be tailored to the needs of the group. Written presentations are usually prepared for a greater diversity of interest groups.

The activities of the AAEC staff include conferences, speaking engagements, and memberships at the regional, national, and international levels. The informal activities of conferences have proven to be fertile ground for the development of awareness of findings in ABE. The AAEC staff at conferences are not unusual in being "at work" from breakfast meetings until midnight talking with individuals and groups about their local program problems. Input, both formal and informal, into planned sessions has also proven valuable. "Speaking engagements," loosely defined, have extended from accompanying official, administrative, and legislative visitors from Washington and elsewhere to project sites, to observing teacher-trainers at work, to delivering keynote speeches at large conferences. Memberships on professional organizations, including elected and appointed offices and duties within several of those organizations, have also put the staff in a position to create awareness.

INTEREST – refers to activities that give enough detail so that recommendations or findings can be applied or implemented at the program level. These activities take the form of printed materials or of oral presentations or conversations, but can be recognized by the specificity of detail—much more specific than the awareness level. Ordinarily these activities result from awareness and a request for guidance, i.e., an expression of interest on the part of the practitioner.

The content is precise enough in terms of methodology and expected outcomes to allow for implementation. Its delivery can be either written or oral initially, but almost always must be written ultimately since too much detail is involved to depend on the memory of the listeners. It should be noted that although written presentations at the interest level should be specific enough to allow for replication of methodology and design, they need not be necessarily "cook-book" in format.

The AAEC has found that printed or oral reports must have different format, content and style for different audiences. For example, in reporting a project at the interest level so that differentiated groups will recognize its feasibility from their perspectives, the AAEC has found that:

(1) State directors of adult education and other administrators need to know the specifics of staff selection and training, cost analysis, etc.;

(2) Professors of higher education engaged in research and professional training need to know about project design and statistics;

(3) The local practitioners (such as teachers, administrators, and counselors for different client groups) need to know the How-to-do-it, e.g., how were clients diagnosed? What parts of what materials were then used for whom? What counseling problems arose, and how were they handled?

(4) The local decision-makers and breakers (the superintendent of schools, his board of education, and political and legislative leaders) need to know both the immediate and long-term economic and social impact of the programs.

It should be noted that at the interest level recommendations about materials and methods cannot be avoided. This amounts to endorsement, an activity that the Office of Education has avoided in the past. However, all recommendations should be presented as based upon present knowledge for specific groups, i.e., all recommendations must be qualified.

TRIAL – **refers to a try-out by the practitioner of recommendations or findings in a sheltered situation such as a workshop, a limited geographic program area such as a county as opposed to a full state, or a small specific client group.**

Activities in the trial stage of change necessarily are consultative, situation-specific, oral, and presented in person. The potential user is involved in or observes an actual try-out of the skill, methodology, delivery system, or other specific findings or recommendations in a sheltered, low-cost situation—cost defined in terms of money, staff time, and negative impact on the adult student involved. Many ABE decision-makers will rely on a demonstration project as a trial if they have access to it and will apply its methodology directly to state and local programs with their financial, staff, and legislative constraints.

ADOPTION – **refers to the adoption by practitioners of recommendations of findings on a broad program level and is the end product of information diffusion activities at the awareness, interest, and trial stages.**

Usually the model above includes an evaluation stage between interest and trial or between trial and adoption. Since this stage can only be inferred by the adoption or rejection of the innovation by the practitioner, it has been omitted from a model for intervention through a Center for Resource Utilization in Adult Education.

## PRINT, NONPRINT, OR PERSONAL CONTACT?

It seems from the AAEC experience that an information dispersal center relying only on print or even on a combination of printand media will not be able to relate existing and new knowledge to regional, state, and local adult education problems for differentiated groups.

Print

Rather than replicating existing print information systems, it would seem appropriate to combine ERIC Syracuse, the National Multimedia Center for Basic Education (NMMC), and the new Center for Resource Utilization in Adult Education (CRU) into one system. The duties of the new CRU in regard to print might be:

(1) Aiding in the acquisition of experimental (professional) and curricular (client) materials to be fed into ERIC and the NMMC. It has been the experience of the AAEC that the travel involved in the change agent function uncovers many experimental projects which do not seem to be generally known in the adult education community or found in ERIC or the NMMC.

(2) Rewriting or encouraging project staffs to rewrite materials for the several audiences seeking information (e.g., administrators, client-contact practitioners, professors, and legislative decision-makers) to be fed into ERIC.

(3) Encouraging the writing (at the several needed levels) of print descriptions of exemplary adult education programs encountered by or recommended to center personnel.

(4) Perhaps recommending specific ERIC microfiche or NMMC abstracts to the field in answer to specific local program needs. These activities might require a graphics person on the staff and production money.

NMMC is in a position to be flexible in such a new system, but there is some question about whether ERIC Syracuse has that flexibility within ERIC Central. Should either of these important systems founder financially on their own, it would seem necessary to fund them as a part of the CRU.

Nonprint

The use of various nonprint media will become increasingly important in the near future. The use of audio and audio-visual presentations might create awareness, interest, and trial functions in information diffusion. The big problem, of course, is that the audiences cannot respond and ask needed questions. However, multiplexing of media delivery systems for two-way communications is within the realm of technology. A WATS line or telephone lecture systems are already possible.

The duties of the new CRU in regard to nonprint might be:

(1) preparing tapes, slide-tapes, and video-tape presentations in answering to local problem situations. This would cut down on costly travel. These could be general (awareness), situation-specific (interest), or possibly show a demonstration project in detail (trial).

(2) preparing media presentations for the general public, e.g., AAEC Pennsylvania module product.

These activities would require trained media people on the staff and production money.

Personal Contact

As outlined above, it is the experience of the AAEC that personal contact, while expensive is a crucial element in information dispersal if that information acquisition is expected to result in adoption of improved practice. Those making the personal contacts must be:

(1) thoroughly familiar with previous knowledge generated in adult education and related subjects for differentiated economic and geographic ethnic groups.

(2) most realistic about the economic, human, geographic and political constraints on the adult education enterprise.

(3) accomplished trouble-shooters when approaching new program situations.

(4) willing to travel extensively and inexpensively.

The first three criteria rule out many new adult education graduates who might fit the fourth criterion.

The duties of the new CRU staff in regard to personal contact in the diffusion of information might be:

(1) Speaking about alternative answers to pressing adult education problems (at either the awareness or interest levels) to state directors, professional groups, state in-service sessions, etc.

(2) Arranging for visitations of decision-makers to exemplary state and local programs and demonstration projects.

(3) Engage in or arrange for training for different audiences in very specific problem areas in cooperation with or at the request of regional staff development planners.

## THE AAEC EXPERIENCE

The following are responses to the BAVTE suggestions for the proposal for a Project for Adoption and Diffusion of Adult Education Information and Materials.

### Statement of the Problem

The AAEC has found that the adult education administrators, practitioners—and also legislative decision-makers—have only limited means for learning of and assessing kinds and qualities of improved practices and products. The AAEC would recommend structure "assessment" not as a field-testing—an expensive, arduous, and questionable activity— but as a gathering and dissemination of program practice and opinion. It would seem that the CRU should be directly linked to the regional staff development projects, but also, if we are serious about coordinating all adult education, it should be designed to meet other federal and private adult education information needs. In addition to OEO, DOL, and DOD, a particularly close alliance needs to be made with the Department of Agriculture's extension divisions.

## Scope of Work

1. Identification and Categorization

Identification of experimental, demonstration, and exemplary efforts will come about through wide reading and through personal contact in travels. Information on exemplary international programs isolated by US delegates to Tokyo should also be sought.

Categorization should not only be by content, but more important by the differentiated groups it might reach, e.g. stationary or upwardly mobile poor; Puerto Rico, oriental, or Mexican-American ESL; ABE, GED, or continuing professional education; rural or urban.

2. Criteria for Evaluation is a touchy matter and with the present level of knowledge about the adult education enterprise could be more destructive than informative. Should such criteria be attempted, it seems essential that there be several sets which differ for different client groups and for different program personnel.

3. A system for diffusion of information about innovations should act at all three levels of awareness, interest, and trial if it is to encourage adoption. It should also include print, nonprint, and personal contact; ERIC-Syracuse and the National Multi-media Center for Adult Basic Education.

4. Technical assistance is really the interest and trial activities of the cooperative extension change model, although awareness activities are sometimes mistakenly seen as technical assistance. To provide technical assistance requires the criteria listed under Personal Contact above in addition to enthusiasm.

5. Review of programs so as to make recommendations to USOE for future action may be too expensive and threatening to program. Acting as a forum for recommendations for the field might be much more appropriate.

## Nature of the Center

Private or Federal?

The proposed Center for Resource Utilization in Adult Education should be a federal function, not a private institutional function. It should be used as a vehicle for communicating USOE policy to the field--a pressing and presently only partially met need, in addition to experimental program information.

Location

Furthermore, not only should it be a federal function, but it probably should not be housed in Washington because of the resulting inaccessibility to the west coast. Complaints to AEA, NAPCAE, and of state directors about eastern meetings and services reinforce this. A radical but feasible possibility might to be to attach the CRU to DHEW Region V. The Region V RPO has demonstrated a commitment to information diffusion. It is probably true that current legislation would not allow such a structure but next year's new legislation certainly could.

The AAEC is convinced that the system described is a most appropriate function for a Center for Resource Utilization in Adult Education. It has been clearly demonstrated by the cooperative extension and replicated by the AAEC within its resource and time constraints. We, therefore, urge BAVTE consideration of the model.

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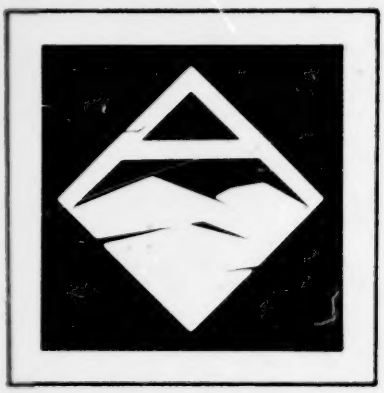

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